

**THE VICTORIAN ERA  
IN FAIRBURY AND AMERICA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The American Victorian Period has always been a fascinating era for me. The people, the styles and customs, the architecture, and the history are in many ways quite unique. However, this period was so recent that characteristics are still quite evident. And the effect on life of the seventies by the Victorian Period was immense.

This paper will inform you on the Victorian Period, concentrating on the Victorian home--especially the homes located in Fairbury, Ill. Four homes built in the Victorian Era will be examined, and similarities and differences will be noted. But above all, this paper hopes to show the Victorian home as it was, and how it is lived in today.

## THE VICTORIAN ERA

The term Victorian, as applied to American Architecture covers a wide variety of styles developed during the Victorian Era--1836-1900. "It was based largely on the medieval Gothic style, but the Victorian Gothic soon became adulterated with Italian, French, Tudor, and Oriental details."<sup>1</sup> One of the chief merits of the period was that it gave the designer a great deal of freedom in developing floor plans for individual needs. Exterior decoration was often used to supposedly unify the entire structure, which was added to and changed in any direction, style, or manner.

Central chimneys or one on each end was the norm. Two stories with large windows and fewer panes developed into a basic style. Large porches and piazzas, decorated with gingerbread, on the front of the Victorian homes, and a bay window with three or five sides was definitely "chic." Shingled walls and lattice work over and under about anything was promoted by many enthusiastic carpenters, ready and willing to show their talent. Many Italianate towers, oriental minarets and horseshoe arches drowned in a sea of wooden lace.<sup>2</sup>

Later years brought variations on all the themes explored during the previous fifty years. Most of the buildings had merits of high ceilings and roominess. The extent of decoration varied greatly with the individual builders and the location of the home. The settled East and large cities showed all degrees of decoration while more rural areas showed more restraint--because of the lack of materials, money, and the need to outdue the neighbors. However, this was not always the rule.

## ANOTHER VIEW

To some people, the very word "Victorian" has come to mean pompous, stuffy, prudish, hypocritical, narrow-minded. No man wants to be told "Don't play the heavy Victorian father." No woman wants to be accused of taking a "Victorian attitude" towards the other sex.

Since most of us don't have any actual experience with the Victorians, we are heavily influenced by pictures.

When we look at the great Brady photographs or perhaps at our own family albums, we are struck by certain characteristics; These people are always dressed to the teeth, they pose stiffly against formal back-grounds of columns and drapery--and they never smile! This impression of crushing dignity is misleading. The Victorians could not smile for the camera because they had to hold still for exposures of several minutes; their heads were often clamped into an iron brace to insure rigidity.<sup>3</sup>

The dark Victorian home that most people think of had more windows, and larger ones, than earlier American homes. They were usually barricaded with layers of shutters, curtains, draperies, valances, but it was still possible to have light.

And many great accomplishments happened during the age named the Victorian period. The first real domestic bath tub was revealed to admiring Americans on Christmas day in 1842 in the city of Cincinnati.<sup>4</sup>

A Mr. Adam Thompson, it seems, had visited Lord John Russell in England and brought back with him plans and specifications for a bathtub. This piece of apparatus, encased in mahogany, lined with sheet lead, was built by carpenters and artisans to Mr. Thompson's specifications and in its completed form weighed about a ton. Water was piped from the pump in the back yard to a tank in the attic whence one pipe led it cold to the tub while a second, passing through the chimney, provided running warm water the temperature of which varied with the degree of fire on the hearth.<sup>5</sup>

Opposition to the tubs soon sprang up, and in Virginia taxes of \$30 per year per tub were imposed.<sup>6</sup> It wasn't until 1853 that Millard Fillmore had one installed in the White House. Previously, the presidents bathed in the Potomac. The opposition soon died and by 1860 the best New York hotel had three. It's interesting to note that now there is a bath for every room. The tin tubs evolved into painted and galvanized tubs, which became porcelain enamel tubs with wooden frames; and then came the steel clad all-copper tub, which was the more direct Predecessor of our modern porcelain tub.<sup>6</sup> And even this reference book shows its age as plastics and fiberglass are now popular on the market.

These modern bathrooms helped pave the way for the development of city water and sewage systems.

In the kitchen, the house was affected by the invention of a process of manufacturing aluminum ware in 1885; the ice refrigerator in 1890; enameled ware in 1895; gas and electric stoves; electric refrigerators and power mixers, grinders, etc., for the house.<sup>7</sup>

And now women are using ice crushers, dish-washers, and compactors in their kitchens of the twentieth-century. "We've come a long way baby."

In 1876 a hand-operated domestic washing machine was put upon the market, ... The vacuum cleaner, invented in 1900, replaced the somewhat ineffective and inefficient carpet sweeper and is now almost universal. At the same time the use of new flooring materials such as linoleum decreased the work necessary on floors.<sup>8</sup>

So of our modern conveniences, it is interesting to see that air conditioning is the only original contribution of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

One thinks of prefabrication as an ultramodern process, but the manufacture of prefabricated buildings--both in wood and in iron was a booming business in nineteenth century industry. "An iron harem for 320 wives of King Eyambo on the Calavar River was made in England and shipped to Africa in 1843."<sup>10</sup> But the cast-iron buildings turned to failure as they had to be painted frequently, cost more than conventional construction, and lost its strength when exposed to heat. The steel skeleton skyscraper came twenty years later.

While many believe that the Victorians were just imitators borrowing all sorts of styles and designs, their bold vitality can teach a lesson to the conformist. Their buildings were in harmony with the time. Victorians, generally speaking, had heavy meals, strong drinks, elaborate clothes, ornate furnishings, flamboyant art, melodramatic plays, loud music, flowery speeches, and thundering sermons in the nineteenth century.

Victorians weren't plagued with specialization or over specialization. Lincoln was a farmer, boatman, storekeeper, postmaster, surveyor, captain of the militia, lawyer, state legislator, congressman, and President. So one can't be too startled when he learns that Independence Hall was designed by a lawyer, the United States Capitol by a physician and the University of Virginia by an ex-President of the United States.<sup>11</sup>

## INSIDE THE VICTORIAN HOME

Quite often, one enters a Victorian house through its large double doors. The doors were usually double because they gave enough space for a casket to be moved in and out of the home. Family funerals, wakes, and visitations were held in the parlors. So double doors were a necessity and not a luxury.

"In the hallway, umbrella stands, hat racks, coat hangers, mirrors, singly or in fearful combination, supplemented the side table and chairs of an earlier day."<sup>12</sup>

The living room was the center of family life. It was quite common to have a bay window, where many family marriages were performed. And "The housewife did not casually experiment with furniture groupings. Furniture, in a Victorian home, was bought to fill a given space, and, once set down, was intended to stay there."<sup>13</sup>

The danger of vacant wall space was avoided by engravings, sporting prints, family portraits, and whatnots filled with ornaments and souvenirs.<sup>14</sup> Parlors were strictly for company. And it was sure to have a piano or melodeon. Heavy lace curtains were probably at all the windows. The furniture was quite often massive black walnut, some of it ceiling high. The carving, scroll work, and a variety of other ornaments made dusting a difficult task.<sup>15</sup>

The dining room was a full sized room and used three times a day, for it was not respectable to ever eat in the kitchen, except in the case of a genuine emergency. A glass china cabinet displayed the choicer dishes, and a large sideboard held the silver. It was not uncommon to find a needlework motto hanging on the wall.

Kitchens were usually located near to the dining room. They were large with a sturdy work table usually located in the center of the room, with a lamp hanging over it. A black wood or coal stove stood on one wall, but they were eventually replaced by an electric or gas range. Pantries off of the kitchens held supplies and goodies left from the previous meal.

In really hot weather, cooking was often moved to a summer kitchen behind the house. It was usually a well built shed, often serving other purposes also. The summer kitchen kept the mess and heat out of the house, simplifying summer living.

A back staircase was common in these houses, and it could usually be entered near the kitchen. It served as access to the back hall and upstairs without using the "good front stairs" and provided a handy race track for the younger children of the home.

The downstairs bedroom was standard in almost every Victorian home. As there were no hospitals, the sick had to be cared for at home. No one wanted to be constantly climbing stairs to give the sick the care that was needed, so the downstairs bedroom was more of a necessity than anything else. Usually it was the elder's bedroom if there was no illness in the family.

The second floor usually contained family and guest bedrooms. Like the parlors, they were usually filled with black walnut, or other large heavy furniture, depending on the time and wealth of the family. Headboards of many beds were ceiling high. Dressers were not dainty pieces either. Marble, heavy mirrors, and deep drawers were put together for a large overall appearance--the sign of the times.

Canopy beds came into their finest as they were not as heavy or massive. Rosewood or walnut being the finer woods, but oak was popular also.<sup>15</sup>

Frequently in the more ample mansions of the well to do, a third floor furnished a ballroom, for in those days prior to the elevator, an extra flight of stairs meant so little . . . and private parties of any size still had to be given on the home premises.<sup>16</sup>

Towers were popular. Their origin may have been in the South; slave owners often used them for looking over their farm lands to make sure the work was getting completed properly. Or they may have been inherited from the widow's walks, so popular on the East coast. Many towers are similar to those used on Italian villas. Wherever they came from, they were popular, but seldom used to any large degree.

Behind the home, a privy, barn, garage, and other assorted buildings could usually be found. As the times and luxuries changed, barns were converted into garages. Service pits were often dug in these garages so that the men of the house could do their own maintenance. The wood sheds and summer kitchens were torn down as they were no longer needed.

## **A CLOSER LOOK**

Four homes of the late Victorian period were studied in Fairbury, Illinois. The following will include what the author saw and heard during his visits with the owners and families of these homes. In conclusion, the homes will be compared, briefly, to show the similarity and great variety in homes of the Victorian period. These four homes were chosen because of their present condition and their age.

## JAMES HOME



## JAMES HOME

The home of Mrs. Alma Lewis-James was constructed in 1872 by Thomas Beach. It is an eight room, two story building made of red brick with a tower. Two rooms were located on either side of the central hall.

A piazza originally decorated the front of the house, with the tower dominating the entire structure. Entering through two large double doors, a visitor would be in a large central hall with a carved walnut staircase on the left wall. There were doors on each side of the hall, leading to the parlor, on the left, and to the living room, on the right. At the far end of the hall were doors leading to the dining room, on the right, and the downstairs bedroom, on the left.

Mr. T. D. George was the mason. The basement walls of the Beach house were of stone. These probably came from the Beach and George Quarry.<sup>19</sup> The Reverend James Lilly, during a visit to the house, said that the architecture of the house is Masonic and very rare, and he said he had never seen anything like it before in a house.<sup>20</sup> The keystones above the windows are Masonic Emblems. Above the front door, the Masonic Emblem simulates Hebrew script. This design could be contributed to the fact that both Beach and George were dedicated Masons.

The basic structure of the home was characteristic of the larger homes of the period. The interior walls are solid brick and are continuous from the basement to the roof. This provided a very solid structure, and one that left little room for change. The outer walls are more unusual with a double wall construction, leaving an airspace between them. This was done for strength, insulation, and fire protection. Fires were frequent in Fairbury at that time, and the Beach home was one of the most fireproof at that time.

On the interior of the house, every room had doors to close it off. The doors that opened into the hallways had transoms above them for added ventilation during the summer. The windows in the tower would be opened in the hot summer, allowing the hot air to escape upwards.

Originally the house was heated by black marble fire-places in each room.<sup>21</sup> But in 1879 a new furnace was installed for central heating. Unfortunately, it disturbed the draft in the fireplaces, so consequently they were bricked up. When the house was built, the wood work was dark brown with the artificial graining which was very fashionable at the time. The ceilings were eleven feet high and ornate plaster mouldings were hung around the chandeliers in the parlor, hall, and living room. Electric lights replaced the gas lights shortly after the central heating was installed. While the gas lights were still used, a machine was buried in the back yard to make the gas. It was a dangerous and tricky affair, a mistake could send the whole thing sky high in an explosion.

Sometime around 1886, an ell was built on the north of the house, adding a bathroom, a kitchen, back hallway, enclosed back stairs; and a maid's room and storage room on the second floor. It was unnecessary to have such high ceilings in the back part of the house, so the back hall was lowered two steps on the second floor. The lateness of this addition could be contributed to the hard times and the fact that Mr. Beach always paid cash.

The piazza, which extended from the east corner of the house to the tower, was typically ornate Victorian. Three fancy wooden arches supported the porch room which was bordered with iron work. The railings of the porch were two bentwood circles resembling ships' wheels, and below, next to the ground, the space was enclosed with lattice work. The

steps were of stone, with a low, curved stone railing, and big slabs of stone made the walk.<sup>22</sup>

"At the top of the steps. . . was 'Mary and her little Lamb' in duplicate, obviously a tender reminder of the Beach daughters, Sarah and Chloe, both dead."<sup>23</sup>

The door way between the living and dining room was the only one in the house that didn't have a door. The opening was ceiling high, and originally, a grill work was located at the top and heavy drapes hung from brass rings on a wooden rod across the opening.

Upstairs, the two rooms on the east side of the hall were different from the other rooms. The two rooms were divided by a big archway. One room was used as a bedroom, and the other as a dressing room. Heavy draperies hung in the archway to make a division and to add to privacy.

The tower was never used too much. It was reached by a spiral stairway from the second floor. Heavy drapes covered the stairway to prevent a loss of heat. When the elevator was installed for Mrs. Lewis, part of the stairway was removed and a trap door replaced it. This made room for the elevator.

The home design seemed to show the influence of women. Corners in the hallways were rounded, and spacious closets were located throughout. Surprisingly, there was no attic.

In the cellar, a large brick cistern provided water for household use, but apparently it was not satisfactory for it was abandoned and partially torn out.<sup>24</sup>

Sixteen elm trees gave the house real dignity, but it was the lions that made the house unique. They were purchased in Chicago and set in place on both sides of the walk. Made of fire clay and painted realistically, they were constantly decorated for parties, receptions, and other house gatherings. It wasn't everyone in Fairbury who had lawn statues, and these were lions!

Like other homes, the Beach house had a barn and privy in the rear. Behind them a large garden and fragrant beautiful bushes adorned the yard.

The combination woodshed and summer kitchen were close to the back porch for convenience. And the back porch was soon latticed to provide shade for the icebox which it enclosed.

In 1897 a new slate roof was put on the house, and then a few years later a new porch was built.

Big porches had become the style for summer comfort, but Grandfather's porch was unlike any others in town. It had stone pillars, curved railings, and a blue tile floor. There was a white tile border with a contrasting design around the edges, and a panel with "T. A. Beach" in front of the steps.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, new wicker furniture was purchased to make the area "livable."

When the Lewis's moved into the Beach home, some modernizing took place. The furnace was eliminated, and a plan was developed so that three homes could be heated by the steam from the Kring brothers' greenhouse boilers. The front stair-way to the cellar was eliminated and made into a closet.

Upstairs, the two room suite had the archway removed and a wall with a door replaced it. The north part became a new bathroom, and the original dressing room was converted into a bedroom. "Lavatories were installed in every room, and a fire hose connected to a faucet, was put in nearly every closet."<sup>26</sup>

Some new furniture was put in, and the parlor was converted to a library, although it still retained some air of a parlor. In the nineteen sixties, a new garage was attached to the back of the house, to replace the old one on the site of the old barn.

The house has changed very little in the past one hundred and two years. It is a symbol of life and death. Nine marriages and seven deaths took place in its historic walls. Generations have lived in the home, and it stands as proud as the day it was built, still guarded by two faithful lions.

## JENSEN HOME



## JENSEN HOME

The home of Mrs. George Jensen was built by the Dominy family in 1878. It is a wood frame house with horizontal wood siding. The structure is typical, with the interior and exterior walls extending from the basement to the attic.

Entering the house through double stained glass doors, one stands in the main hall which is decorated in magnificent hand carved rosewood. In the main hall, the rosewood dado is on both sides of the hall and also on the side of the carved staircase. The staircase is located on the right side of the hall. A gas light is placed on the main post of the banister. A chandelier gives light to this hall.

Two rooms on each side of the main hall, plus the kitchen and other rooms at the back make up the first floor arrangement. The rooms on the main floor--parlor, living room, dining room, and downstairs bedroom--are quite large in size. They have eleven or twelve foot ceilings with windows of almost the same height. The mouldings at the floor and ceiling are ornate and line all four main floor rooms and the hall.

A small conservatory is located off of the dining room.

The doorways into the dining room, parlor, and living room are six to seven feet wide and have very ornate carved decorations. The sliding doors, concealed in the walls when not in use, are also elaborate. The doorway between the living room and downstairs bedroom is the same style also.

On the carved decorations below the lintel in the doorways, the brass and wood rods to hold the drapes are still in place although the draperies have been removed. The draperies hung on only one side of the doorways of the living room and parlor, but were offset so that they obstructed the view from one room to another. This added to the privacy without closing the sliding doors.

The chandeliers in these main rooms are brass and other metals with etched glass globes. The builder, knowing that electricity was the coming form of light, used fixtures that had gas jets and spaces for electric lights also. The globes hanging down were for the electric light and the upright globes were for the gas jets. While gas was still in use, a machine had to be located outside to manufacture the gas.

The five marble fireplaces in the house are all uniquely different. One is located in the parlor, one in the dining room, one in the living room, and two are located in upstairs bedrooms. Tapestry fireplace screens are located in front of most of the fireplaces. These screens hide the hearth when it was not in use.

Central heating with marble topped radiators was also added after the original structure was built.

Behind the downstairs bedroom is a bath. The original porcelain on steel basin is still there, but the tin tub was replaced with a small modern one of the same size to fit the space available.

The kitchen has been modernized. However, the dumb waiter between the first and second floors is still in its place on the wall in the kitchen. There is a door into the kitchen from the street, one from the back hall, and one from the back porch. The door from the street was used mainly for ventilation and by the iceman when he made the ice deliveries. A plate rack extends completely around the walls of the kitchen at a height of about eight feet.

The back staircase enters the small back hall between the entrance to the kitchen and the door into the main hall.

Upstairs, the main hallway is large with four bedrooms located directly off of it. Two on the east side are joined by a doorway with sliding doors. Off of the N.E. bedroom is the upstairs bath, which can also be reached by the back hall. This bathroom also has the porcelain on steel lavatory. There are two other bedrooms on the opposite side of the hall. One has a built in lavatory. This might have been the guest room originally.

Above the kitchen and off of the back hall is another bedroom, a storage room, and the back staircase. In the attic there used to be a tank for the water supply for the house, but it was no longer needed when the city water system was installed.

Originally there was a barn and other assorted buildings behind the Dominy home, but with the increasing expansion of the city and the lack of need for the buildings, they were removed. All that remains now is a grape arbor.

The large porch which is now on the house was added some years after it was built, probably around 1900. It was a sign of the times. A portion of the porch was removed in the 1950's to make a carport for Mrs. Jensen.

The most outstanding feature of the house is its wood-work on the interior of the home. The rosewood in the hall, cherry in the parlor, and the other woods throughout the house are spectacular. On each corner of the windows there is a hand carved ornament. There are well over a hundred of these in the house, over each window and door, and each one is different. The carver spent most of the duration of the building of the house to complete the carvings in the home. He would turn out about two per day. In addition to this much of the work on other parts of the house, for example--the staircase, and the exterior, were all done by hand. It is an impressive sight and thought.

## RAMSEY HOME



## RAMSEY HOME

The home of Aldine Ramsey was built by the McDowell family around 1875. Originally it was constructed with horizontal siding, but this was later shingled in 1930. The shingles remain today. One of the interesting features of this home is the landscaping. When the Ramseys moved into the home in 1930, there was not a tree or shrub around the acreage. Mr. Ramsey quickly went to work and planted a multitude of things around the house. In later years it became known as "Hidden Acres" because there were many times when the growth completely hid the home. The plantings are still being constantly trimmed and thinned.

One enters onto a porch, then goes through double doors into a small foyer. A rose colored lamp is hanging down into the center of the foyer and it lights the spiral staircase that extends all the way past the second floor into the tower above.

One door in the foyer opens into the parlor, and the other doorway leads to an uncommonly spacious living room. The parlor and the living room also have a doorway connecting them. There are sliding doors in all the doorways between the first floor rooms--except the ones that have been removed from the doorways into the conservatory.

There are transoms above these doorways between the parlor, living room, and their doorways into the foyer. It is somewhat unusual to see such large transoms.

Behind the parlor is the downstairs bedroom. To the right of the living room is the dining room, and to the front of the dining room, but still off of the living room is the conservatory. The conservatory was converted to year round use as a sitting room by the Ramseys. It has entrances to both the living and dining rooms.

Originally, the downstairs bedroom served as the dining room and the present dining room was the bedroom. The switch would go unnoticed, as the floor plan is very flexible, if no one mentioned the change.

A black marble fireplace is located in both the parlor and the living room.

Beautiful wooden baseboards and ceiling mouldings trim all the main rooms. And the chandeliers are hung from magnificent plaster ornamentations on the ceilings. They are painted soft colors and make the chandeliers look even more beautiful. The chandeliers and other light fixtures in the house are electric and were installed when the house was built.

The upstairs hall runs over one side of the living room. Off of this hall are the door to the tower, a bedroom on the left, and a suite of rooms with adjoining bath to the right. The hall curves, revealing another entrance to the suite of bedrooms and the bath.

Another bedroom and a storage room are located on opposite sides of the back hall, with the back staircase extending downward next to the hall which separates the two rooms.

The first floor bath is located in a short hall between the downstairs bedroom and the kitchen. It is in this hall that the back staircase may also be entered.

The kitchen has been modernized. A serving pantry was removed and that space was added to the kitchen, making it quite spacious by any standard.

There is no back porch, except an enclosed set of stairs to the back door at ground level. And only a short distance away the barn and garage which was added to it still stand.

The Ramsey home is cool and comfortable, with an air of formality conveyed by the awe inspiring spiral staircase, beautiful but not overdone decoration, and the stately nature of the surrounding acreage.

## HENDERSON HOME



## HENDERSON HOME

The McDowell house is the residence of Miss Dorothy Henderson. It was built around 1898-1900 and is of wood frame construction. The square shape has a wide porch spanning the front of the house, with a porch swing in an appropriate spot. The exterior windows are all about the same size, and unusually wide. A central chimney protrudes through a shingled roof. Dormers are set on all four sides of the attic.

Entering through a wide single door, there is a tiny foyer with an ornate oak carving below the lintel of the door-way of the living room. One walks directly into the living room and notices the green and brown mosaic tile fireplace with the staircase going around the chimney on two sides.

The parlor is the other front room, and it is located off to the right of the living room. Miss Henderson's great great grandparent's sofa and chair grace this room. There is another beautiful oak decorative piece above the doorway between the living room and parlor. The heavy draperies have been removed here, but the pole remains.

Large doorways with sliding doors connect all the first floor rooms. Behind the parlor is the downstairs bedroom, and behind the living room is the dining room.

In the dining room, an old silk thread cabinet serves as a cactus plant stand. The cabinet was used in the family store. Doors from the dining room lead to the back porch, the kitchen--by way of the pantry, and the downstairs bedroom.

To the rear of the downstairs bedroom and between the kitchen is the downstairs bath. It has been modernized, however the bath upstairs has the original tub with feet. The foot tub, with its own tiny feet, was removed to the basement when replacement parts for the fixtures were no longer available.

The back porch is elle shaped, extending behind and to one side of the kitchen. It is latticed, which helped to shade the icebox that was located there. The porch was also large enough for a table and chairs, so many meals were eaten there in cool comfort on hot summer days and evenings.

Electricity was in use by the time the house was constructed, so there was no need to go through any conversions. And fortunately the water works was also completed as the house doesn't have a well.

Upstairs, the hall takes a good portion of the room, however there are still four good sized bedrooms and a large bath. The bedrooms contain brass and black walnut beds, with matching furnishings.

The back stairs are located in the back hall and was entered on the first floor near the kitchen. Just a short distance behind the house, the barn still stands. It was converted into a garage when the horses were no longer used. Built next to the barn is a small shed. It is no longer used for much except general storage: but it provides a good shield from the alley.

The house lacks many of the frills of the Victorian home. There are no cornices, fancy mouldings, or large plaster ornaments, but the atmosphere is still formal. Only two doorways have elaborate carvings and ornamentation, but the home appears to be quite cozy--even though it still has eleven foot ceilings. This home reveals a trend toward more modern and informal living.

## IN COMPARISON

The James, Ramsey, Jenson, and Henderson homes were all built at different times during the American Victorian Period. Their construction varies from brick to wood, and the interior floor plans are also different. Exterior ornamentation varied from moderately elaborate to plain. There were many factors that influenced the design of these homes. Money, family preferences, builders, the time, and society all made a difference in the structure. While one can't make broad generalizations from only examining four homes, some points can and should be noted.

The two earlier homes (James and Jensen) have wide central halls, with a straight staircase extending to the second story on one side of the main hall. Doors from the hall open onto the four main floor rooms--parlor, living room, dining room, and downstairs bedroom.

The later homes of Ramsey and Henderson do not have the central hall. The Henderson home has its entrance directly into the living room, and the Ramsey home has a small foyer with an entrance directly into the parlor or the living room.

In all the homes, except the Jensen home, the living room is larger than the parlor. And the living room in the Ramsey home is quite large by Victorian standards, and even modern standards. There is a bay window or window seat in all of the homes.

Two homes have towers and two homes don't. They all have wide porches, although the Ramsey and Henderson are the only two which still have their original porches. The James and Jensen homes have had their porches added.

All four homes have back staircases and downstairs bedrooms. The kitchens are approximately the same size and they all have pantries off of them.

On the exterior, the Jensen and James home have the most ornamentation and gingerbread--but neither house is overdone. Only the Henderson and James house have latticed back porches. And the Ramsey home is the only one with the elaborate plaster decoration above the chandeliers. The James home had some originally, but they have since come down.

The James home is the only one to not have a conservatory. And the Jensen home is the only one with a dumb waiter.

The ceilings in the homes are all eleven or twelve feet high. But the interior woodwork varies. In the Jensen home there is very elaborate woodwork, while the Ramsey home has wood baseboards and cornices, but of simpler design. The Henderson home has only a little elaborate woodwork in two doorways, the rest are plain. The woodwork in the James home is now painted, but there is little decorative woodwork at all, plaster was used for most of the decoration.

Doors with transoms were used in the James and Ramsey home quite extensively. The Jensen and Henderson homes have some upstairs. But the Ramsey home even had transoms above the large sliding doors.

These sliding doors were used quite extensively in the three homes with the James home as the exception. It used only the regular hinged doors.

What all of this shows is that each individual built a home to suit his tastes, needs, and pocketbook. In my opinion, the atmosphere of the Jensen and James homes is much more formal than the Ramsey and Henderson homes, which lean to more informality. Later in the nineteen hundreds, parlors were not even built--only living rooms. Then the family room started to become the informal living area, and the living room took on a more formal air, just as the parlor did in earlier years.

Times have changed, yet things still revert to the past. One can purchase a replica of the porcelain on steel basins that were used in the Jensen home for everyday use in the seventies, Antique Victoria furniture is now being used in conjunction with modern furniture, although many of the tall pieces don't fit into today's homes. But one of the main points to see is that the Victorian home, whether it is late, middle, or early Victorian was a very liveable home for its time, and that it makes a very wonderful home today. And I know four ladies who will back me up.

## **A THANK YOU**

Without the great help of Dorothy Henderson, Peach Jensen, Aldine Ramsey, and especially Aunt Alma Lewis-James, I would have never been able to do this paper. They spent many hours talking with me, and allowing me to poke through their homes. I owe them a great big thank you for their time and patience and I don't know how I'll ever be able to repay them.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Henry L. Williams and Ottalie K. Williams, *A Guide to Old American Houses* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., Inc. 1962), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>John Maass, *The Gingerbread Age* (New York: Ainehart & Company, Inc., 1957), pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup>Albert F. Bemis and John Burchard, *The Evolving House, Volume 1* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Technology Press 1933), p. 306.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 306-307.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>9</sup>Maass, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>12</sup>MericAt. Rogers, *American Interior Design* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1947) p. 145.

<sup>13</sup>AlmaLewis-James, *Stuffed Clubs and AntiMacassars* (Fairbury, Ill.: Record Printing Co., 1967) p. 162.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>15</sup>Rogers, p. 146.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>19</sup>Alma Lewis-James, *The First One-Hundred Years*,

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, P. 39.

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Rogers, Meric R. ***American Interior Design***. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1947.

Williams, Henry L. and Ottalie K. ***A Guide to Old American Houses***. New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1962.

### Other Sources--

Personal Interviews with	Miss Dorothy Henderson
	Mrs. George Jensen
	Mrs. Elmer Ramsey
	Mrs. Alma Lewis-James
	Mrs. Floyd Stafford

## Additional Photographs

*too bad to allow*  
The Ramsey Home



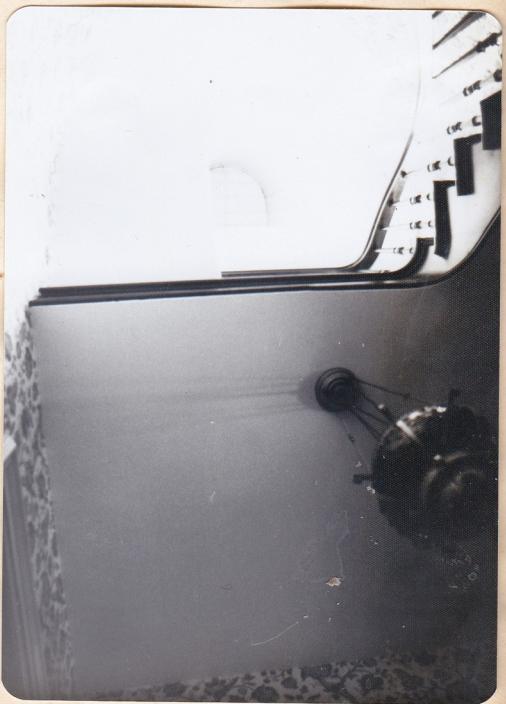
"Hidden Acres"



A Spiral Staircase.



Plaster Ornamentation



... to the Tower

The Ramsey Home



Living Room



Parlor  
The desk is walnut, made by  
a carpenter from trees near  
Avoca.



Dining Room & Conservatory



Downstairs Bedroom



Ramsey Home's

Barns, Garages, & Sheds.



Henderson's



Henderson's



Ramsey Home Upstairs Hallway



Back Staircase

Ramsey Home

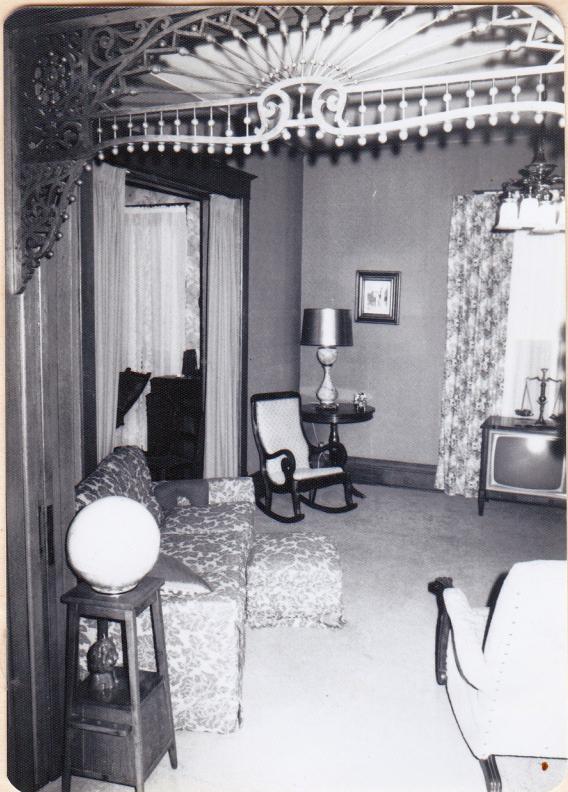


Jensen Home Upstairs Hallway



Upstairs Hallway

Jensen Home



Parlor

The  
Henderson  
Home



Parlor Sofa & Chair



Thread Cabinet



Dining Room

# The Henderson Home



An adjustable reclining rocker.



The Front Porch



Notice the feet...



And the Back Porch.



A marble fireplace in a bedroom of  
the Jensen home. A lavatory was  
located in the Arch.



Henderson Home



Black Walnut anyone?  
Or do you like it plain?



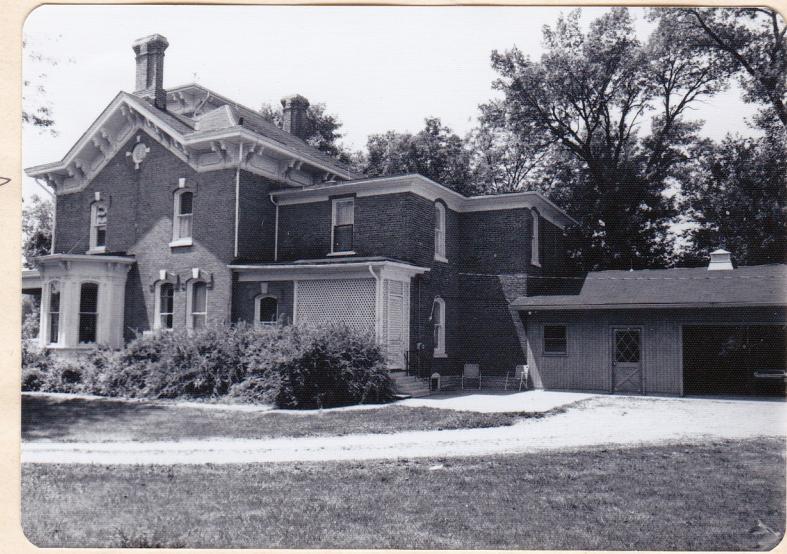
Mrs. Jensen's Mother's First Bed.



The Main Hall



The Porch... Note the fan tail window above  
the doors, and the masonic keystones.



Notice the Living Room Bay Window,  
Latticed Rear Porch,  
The Ell addition,  
The Garage addition.

*The James Home*



Library - Parlor



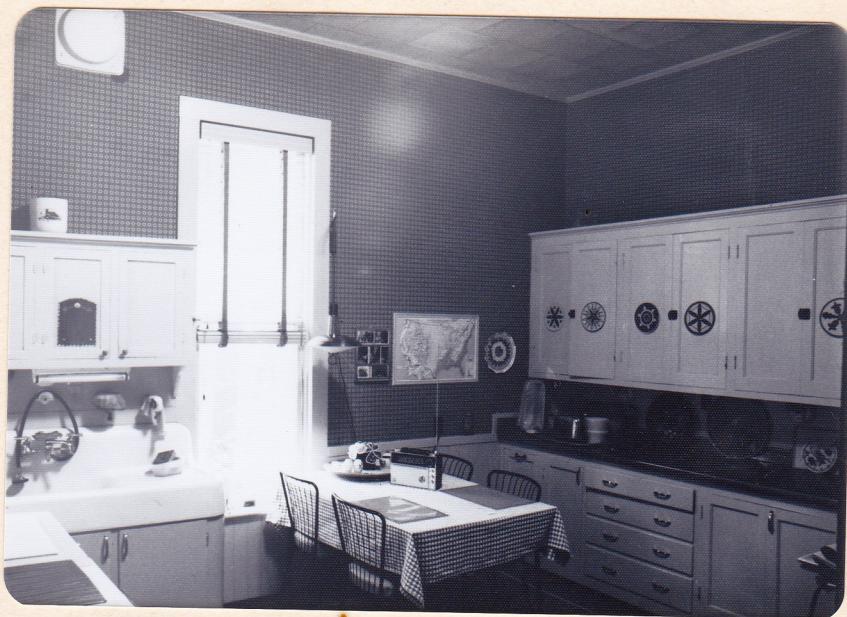
Cabriole, Made in 1800's



Downstairs Bedroom



Dining Room - Grandfather Clock  
is 300 years old.



Ramsey Home

For the Cook!



James Home

The Old



The New



The Lewis Home, Now it's Apartments



More Apartments. Little left after  
the new siding...



James Home Ironwork Note the lions



Woodwork Jensen Hom



James Home Desks



Chairs James

*The Jensen Home*



*Downstairs Lavatory*



*Parlor Fireplace & Screen*



*Parlor Windows, Shutters*



*Downstairs Lavatory*



Note ironwork on roof.

## The Jensen Home



Dining Room Door



Kitchen Door, Conservatory



Front Porch

The Jensen Home



The Living Room



Stained Glass Doors  
oooh! ↑ beautiful



Front Hall



Tapestry over the Stairway

